

A Social Crisis:

While other industries are facing a workforce crisis, we are facing a social crisis with a human toll that affects us all.



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Message from the President

2021 has proven to be another year of success at Venture as we created new programs and initiatives while still managing the global pandemic and all of the logistical challenges that come with it. We have all essentially learned to live with COVID-19 and remain hopeful that we can one day truly put it behind us as people continue to be vaccinated. However, another long-standing threat continues to loom over the entire human services industry: there simply are not enough people to do this incredibly important work.

It is well known that there is now a workforce crisis in America as we deal with the pandemic. What is less well known is that this industry has had the same crisis for several years, long before anyone ever heard of COVID-19. Now, that workforce issue has ballooned into a social crisis. The safety net that so many people rely on is being threatened like it never has before. Already, too many people are unable to get the help they need because there isn't a professional to provide those supports. And it's getting worse.

Every day, people with disabilities and other unique needs depend on a professional network to provide them with opportunities to learn new things, access the community, socialize, and be heard, all while being kept safe. What happens when that network is disrupted? The opportunities disappear and the people who are entitled to them become detached from their communities. Their mental health and wellness suffer and their families have to find a way to keep them safe, often at the expense of working. For more than a generation, Venture and our peer agencies have seen to it that those who want and deserve an opportunity to thrive have had it. Our dedicated

workforce opened doors and changed lives, and did so in virtual anonymity. Now, with fewer people to open those doors, more and more people are at risk of being left behind. So, how did we get here?

For too long, society has neither recognized nor invested in the importance and success of the work done by talented professionals at provider agencies. This workforce has been underpaid, undervalued, and overburdened for many years. Now, that lack of investment has created the crisis we face. Agencies that hold state and federal contracts need to finally be paid adequately so that our employees have a truly livable wage, affordable healthcare, access to higher education, and affordable housing. That is how we finally turn a job in human services into a career in human services. It is the only way we can keep opening doors and creating opportunities.

We can no longer wait to provide recognition and security to the committed individuals who dedicate their lives to helping others. Agencies like Venture need a viable, long-term workforce that can continue to grow the safety net that Massachusetts has always been committed to having. It is time to value the skills and dedication of people who make up this safety net by acknowledging their professionalism and paying them for it. The best way to honor all the people who show up every day to do tremendously difficult work is to finally build a system that gives them the financial security that allows them to make this work a career. These selfless people have deserved it for a very long time.

Mike Hyland
President & CEO



Workforce Advocacy

THE TIPPING POINT OF A SOCIAL CRISIS

The human service industry is facing its most serious crisis yet, with massive staffing shortages leaving programs for adults with developmental disabilities completely overwhelmed. Exceptional direct support professionals with years of experience are being taxed to their limit, providing quality care in the midst of significant vacancy rates and employee turnover. Agencies from all over the Commonwealth are unable to meet the ever-increasing demand for services. People in need of support wait for the opportunity to attend day programs because agencies struggle to fill staff positions. In fact, many agencies have shuttered their programs, leaving participants with a lack of meaningful community integration. Their residential

program is left to fill the gap, often without reimbursement from the state. For individuals who live with their families, parents and guardians are left struggling with a lack of support. While we recognize that many industries across the nation are experiencing their own shortages, we are left to wonder what will happen if our sector collapses. The human toll of this crisis could have an unimaginable impact on decades of progress that has been made for the disability community.



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OUR ADVOCACY

Our agency employs more than 600 direct support professionals who provide emotional, recreational, medical, and behavioral support to hundreds of individuals. This number only represents a sliver of the people working in similar positions in other agencies across the Commonwealth. Nationally, the human services workforce is experiencing a 45% turnover rate, which threatens the stability of services. We are committed to helping to manage the human services workforce crisis on a national stage, which means working with state and local legislators to represent our employees. Venture has

The screenshot shows a newsletter layout. The header includes the Venture Community Services logo and the title 'Legislative Update Summer 2021'. The main content area is titled 'WORKFORCE ADVOCACY' and features a 'MISSION' section, a 'CORE VALUES' section, and a 'Hello Team Venture' section. The 'Hello Team Venture' section discusses the organization's commitment to addressing the human services staffing crisis and mentions the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR). The 'CORE VALUES' section lists 'Integrity', 'Respect', 'Empowerment', and 'Collaboration'. The 'Hello Team Venture' section also includes a quote from the ADDP (Association of Developmental Disability Providers) and a list of actions the committee will take, such as collecting data, conducting a salary survey, and identifying and offering recommendations to change EOHHD policies and regulations.

Legislative Updates: Venture has begun an initiative to increase communications with legislators through a quarterly newsletter in an ongoing effort to build relationships, increase awareness, and create a bigger network of support.



established working relationships with nearly 30 state legislators from the districts where we operate. We continually reach out to discuss concerns affecting our employees and the people we support. We advocate for increased funding that will address the wage and benefit concerns of direct care workers. We participate with both regional and national trade organizations to promote the professionalization of the human services industry. Venture works closely with the Association of Developmental Disability Providers, The Providers Council and the national advocacy organization ANCOR (American Network of Community Options and Resources) to promote the best possible services for the individuals we support and the professionalization of the human services industry. We represent the interests of our workforce by advocating for better wages, access to healthcare, student loan reimbursement and more.

HOW CAN I HELP?

This year, more than ever, we are encouraging our constituents to contact their legislators to show support for our employees.

To support national advocacy efforts, visit ancor.org/amplifier to sign up for their newsletter and easily use their action tool to compose a message to Congress. ANCOR has made it simple to contact your senators and representatives, giving you the tools you need to express your concern about the workforce crisis.

GET INVOLVED

ANCOR
ancor.org

A national community of providers for people with disabilities

ADDP
addp.org

Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers

Providers' Council
providers.org

Join The Caring Force to show your support for human service providers and their critical work by signing up for advocacy alerts at providers.org/the-caring-force/sign-up

Staff Spotlight



L to R: West Chestnut Street Staff, Paxton Street Staff, Fiske Hill Road Staff

BROCKTON

The staff team at our West Chestnut Street program has done an incredible job supporting the five young men who live there, helping them to develop new skills and discover the best in themselves. This creative, quick-thinking team has helped these individuals learn new levels of independence, develop meaningful friendships, and overcome their fears. The staff has worked to help these men manage their stress during the pandemic, teaching them valuable coping skills as they navigate their way into adulthood such as enjoying nature and expressing themselves in healthy ways. The staff have also shared their experiences learning compassion, patience, and ongoing creativity. “We have found ourselves thinking outside of boxes we didn’t even know were there. We’ve learned that there’s never a problem that can’t be solved – we just haven’t thought of it yet,” says Wilma, the program’s manager for the past several years.

Many thanks to the staff at West Chestnut Street: Temidayo Adelakun, Mark Boneski, Vincent Daley, Ivan Mendoza, Prince Nyante, Elda Ramos, Cassandra St. Fleur, and Wilma Varfley.

LEICESTER

The group of staff at our Paxton Street residence works to provide skilled nursing care around the clock. Medical model houses require exceptional teamwork between direct support and nursing staff, who work side by side to provide the best care to individuals with complex needs. Program

manager Doel highlights communication and willingness to help each other in making heavy work light. “Every staff member comes to work bringing a smile on their face in times when we don’t know what the world is coming to,” he says. He credits the staff with having a deep understanding of each individual’s needs and coming together to provide opportunities for outings and activities.

A big thank you to the team at Paxton Street: Ophelia Adu, McKayla Ball, Noel Boateng, James Karuri, Christ Luzolo, Doel Mossetty, Lucy Muiruri, Esther Mwangi, Ebenezer Odei, Peninah Okuku, Heather Ritchie, Gilbert Wambugu, and Peter Wambugu.

STURBRIDGE

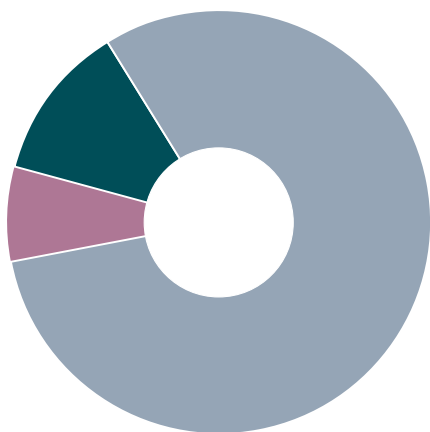
The thoughtful, hardworking team at Fiske Hill Road continues to persevere despite widespread workforce recruitment challenges. With two residents unable to return to their day programs due to staffing shortages, this group of dedicated employees is small but mighty. Barbie, Tony, and Doris work together to manage their work-life balance while continuing to provide the best care for the ladies who reside in the home. The program’s manager, Barbie, credits their success with their willingness to help each other. “Without teamwork, we’d have nothing,” she says.

Thank you to the incredible staff team at Fiske Hill Road: Hellen Githui, Anthony Peprah, Doris Quainoo, Stacy St. Laurent, and Barbie White.

Statement of Activity

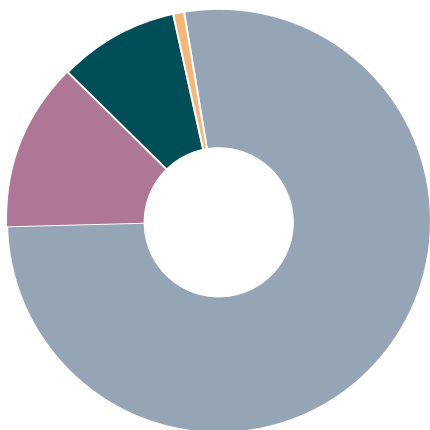
REVENUE SOURCES

- Department of Developmental Services / **81%**
- Misc. Government Contracts / **12%**
- Other / **7%**



EXPENDITURES

- Residential Services / **77%**
- Other Support Services / **13%**
- Facility & Operations / **9%**
- Other / **1%**



Venture Community Services is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that provides support to individuals facing diverse challenges through a compassionate and dedicated workforce using innovative practices that encourage independence, empowerment, and opportunity. Federal Tax Identification 04-2593315

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How can I help? Donate at venturescs.org.

This year was an unprecedented one for the human services industry. Consider making a donation in honor of an exceptional direct support professional or contributing to our annual Giving Tree Program.